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CRIME AND INSANITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.¹

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[This article was sent in November last, to Professor John H. Wigmore, of Northwestern University, by Signa Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, of Turin, daughter of Professor Lombroso, and wife of Professor Ferrero, for publication in the JOURNAL, with the following explanation: "Within the week I have received the last three numbers of the JOURNAL of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology, and have just reviewed them for my father's 'Archivio di Psichiatria.' I cannot delay expressing to you my enthusiasm for the way in which the JOURNAL has started off so excellently. As a mark of my appreciation of its high character, I send you herewith the manuscript of an article corrected by my father's own hand for publication and found in his desk. I had supposed at first that it had been contributed by him to some European journal; but I have not seen it anywhere in print since his death; so that it will now receive its first publication in the JOURNAL; and it has indeed a special interest for America."—EDS.]

It is not as easy to become a prophet in our days as it was formerly, and it is still less easy to be believed as such. But there are prophecies unconnected with the more or less debatable question of spiritism and prediction, which are only generalizations of existing phenomena, and therefore are to be more generally admitted and accepted.

To say, for instance, that the number of insane will increase five times, and perhaps more, in the coming century, is only a simple statistical deduction from what we see happening in most civilized nations. Jacobi showed that in France the insane increased in 33 years by 53 per cent, while the population grew only 11 per cent. In Italy the number of insane, which was 17,471 in 1880, had been tripled in 27 years, and reached in 1907, 45,000. In the United States the population doubled in 30 years, while insanity increased six times or more, from 15,610 cases to 95,998.

This is bound to happen everywhere, for the causes responsible for the plague are increasing in number and intensity. South America exports mate and cocoa. The Orient uses its opium and haschich, Northern Europe introduces into the South its beer and whisky, while the South sends north its spoiled maize; each one of these products being

¹Translated by Dr. Victor von Borosini, Chicago.

responsible for numerous deadly brain poisonings. Deadly also are the ether, the morphine and the codein, which, under the guise of medicine, given at the hospitals, proceed to disturb the peaceful home of the citizen and lay snares for his mind in the same way as has been done for centuries by wine, and still worse by its substitutes, beer, brandy, and vermouth. It is easy to preach in fiery words against this state of things. Refuge is taken in intoxicants when the mind is most excitable and excited, when it seeks to wrest from the increasing dullness of the daily life a bit of artificial happiness. For in the same ratio as civilization and the human mind develop, the amount of the consumption of liquor will increase; alcohol as a stimulus will, in its turn, be given up only for more dangerous drugs such as ether, morphine and the like, until more sensible human beings have learned to offer to the mind craving for enjoyment greater and more vigorous attractions than those offered by these lethal stimuli. The degrading worship of the golden calf impels men in an inferior position to reach out for the highest without respite or moderation. In this struggle man uses up prematurely his most vital forces, and in seeking repose from fatiguing work, when resting will no longer benefit him, he increases the damage done by alcoholic poisoning. This kind of strenuous work has in 30 years caused, as Beard observes, every citizen of the United States to become a neurasthenic, and the same effects are being produced in the more civilized parts of Europe. As Kraepelin says, "too many nerves and not enough strength."

As a probable result of the exhaustion, which manifests itself in hereditary degeneration, we see how in recent years (this tendency will increase much more in the coming century) the forms of insanity have changed, how the very curious forms of monomania, melancholy and hallucination, on account of which our insane asylums have been full of so many imaginary kings, inventors and victims of free masonry and of jesuits, tend to disappear. They are replaced by not clearly definable, so-called mental disturbances or by a form of precocious insanity, in which the mental confusion is hardly distinguishable from the old monomania and melancholy, the separating lines being so blunted. The discovery is due to the great Kraepelin, who had hardly announced the very existence of these phenomena, when they began to increase at an alarming rate. These precocious forms of insanity, as well as alcoholism, dementia paralytica and the anomalous forms of epilepsy, will constitute the greatest number of cases in our insane asylums, while, under the influence of the beneficial effects of steadily increasing wealth, the number of idiots, imbeciles and victims of pellagra will steadily decrease.

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CRIME.

Vice versa crime will decrease in extent and in ferocity. He, however, who studies the statistics of modern Europe does not as yet find much consolation. Though the most ferocious crimes, like murders, are really decreasing, thefts, embezzlements, and like crimes, have greatly increased, and the number of forgeries has almost doubled. The number of crimes has increased materially. We note, however, in Australia, a lessening, while in the United States the growing number is solely due to the colored population and to the immigrants. In London and Geneva, where all the preventive and defensive actions against crime have been taken, crime has diminished each year, though they are large centers of population. For these reasons one can easily prophesy that the number of crimes will doubtlessly be greatly reduced in the coming century. With a more complete knowledge of psychiatry, not a few will spend their lives for the greater protection of the others, in insane asylums. The increasing number of repeaters and juvenile offenders observed in Europe (repeaters in France in 1880 were 20 per cent, in 1890 40 per cent, in Belgium still more; the number of juvenile offenders grew in Italy from 30,118, in 1890, to 67,944 in 1905) can be explained by the doubly abnormal state of criminal law and prison administration. This is due to the fact that, only cautiously, and in a small measure, the conclusions of the modern school of criminology in regard to the physical and mental deficiency of so many criminals, were adopted, while almost all the doctrines of the old school are still adhered to. So we find the disadvantages of both schools and the advantages of neither in the system of legal and penal administration. It is, as if the alienists, still full of the old conception that insanity is a sin to be punished by chains and flogging, accepted only partially the theory that it is the result of organic anomaly to be treated partly as a sin, partly as a disease.

Our point is, that many crimes are natural phenomena, not caused by the human will. We must, therefore, without being hard-hearted, defend ourselves against them. Many have instinctively accepted this theory. The penal codes, based upon the doctrine of free will and intimidation, have been mitigated in many inappropriate ways not consistent with the conception of the fundamental varieties of the subject. Hereby the damage done by the old school, was increased, they reduced the time of sentence, suppressed the radical capital punishment and the confinement for life, softened altogether the old system, without making it more effective.

In the coming century obstacles in the way of reforms will be removed by the adoption of many of the most essential measures sug-

gested by our school, as is the case in London and Geneva, where the lifelong confinement of incorrigibles, and the seclusion of insane criminals in an insane asylum have been adopted as a means of preventing any contact of human society with the most dangerous criminals, and of making at the same time their propagation impossible. The coming century will provide on a large scale agricultural colonies for abandoned and neglected children, shelters for the unemployed and vagrants, decent shows at a reasonable price for the frequenters of saloons, and will introduce fines, warnings by the judge, work in the open air, shower baths, confinement in the home in place of the degrading prisons, which tend to increase crime instead of making it rarer.

Through such reforms we shall eliminate to a large extent casual delinquency, especially of juvenile offenders, who contribute such an appalling majority to the large army of criminals. In the future we will find in the few prisons, which must be maintained, schools, conferences, libraries, interviews with men of judgment and honesty, premiums for work well done. And it will be shown to the criminaloid, and to the criminal moved by passion, that, nothing is done to curb him, but everything is done for his good. When they feel that their own personality is no longer crushed, and see that they are directed to some useful occupation, treated like human beings, and not like slaves under a convict number, the prison discipline will not only improve, but the cases of backsliders will very much decrease.

This does not mean, however, that crime will entirely disappear, because it is partly the result of human nature, partly of social conditions. While decreasing to some extent, it is going to change, but not to disappear entirely. The statistics of civilized countries already show this tendency; crimes committed by women, which at present represent a fraction of the criminal acts committed by men, show an increase. And not only in number, but also in seriousness they will approach those of men. We have seen Madame Humbert profiting for years by the most subtle banking schemes, as manifestly the greatest swindlers among men could not have done. Madame Gouransee advantageously used newspaper advertisements, and her most advanced knowledge of toxicology in order to seduce, in the hope of a rich marriage, individuals whom she poisoned and buried in her own garden. A German Gretchen, profiting by her legal knowledge of a holographic will and of falsification, and of the advantage of a revolver over poison, shoots her lover to benefit by his inheritance.

The crimes of men, while decreasing, will become more complicated and will show by their nature that men profit by and advanta-

geously make use of all progress along technical, scientific and economic lines. We have already seen in our day new crimes committed with the help of the bicycle, the automobile, and, in the United States, with railroad trains, as, for instance, in the case of Tracy, who fled from the Oregon prison on a railroad engine. Pursuit can only be undertaken with the help of another train, full of guards.

In the United States, in Russia, and in Germany, veritable stock companies for the committing of thefts on a large scale, with a regular system of bookkeeping and accounting, have been discovered. In Moscow we have seen a society of 30 aristocratic robbers with an enormous capital, with luxuriously fitted houses in town and in the country, with servants, carriages and automobiles. In New York we find insurance swindlers (eight companies were defrauded millions). A band of these swindlers took out numerous policies for old and sick people; for the medical examination they presented persons in the best of health, they falsified the names and even the death certificates. They received premiums before the policy holders had died and held funerals with a wax figure, while the person, who, after the sworn statement of the physician, should have been inside the coffin, followed the funeral cortege with his associates. Holmes will be the best representative of the criminal of a future epoch. To Holmes poisons were the means, and life insurance policies the inspiration for committing crime, but, in his extensive criminal acts, he, as a child of his century, made use of the telephone, the telegraph and newspaper advertising. The criminals of the coming century will be of his type, as I said before.

To resume, crime will decrease in number and seriousness, and, if criminals employ modern discoveries in the perpetration of their deeds, they will find that the progress of civilization, as shown in anthropometric measurements, photographic description of criminals, telegraph and telephone, and the most subtle analyses of toxicology offers the most powerful agents for their discovery, apprehension and suppression.